

ETS- HK5500

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE/NODIS

September 12, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR

**THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE**

SUBJECT: Forthcoming Troop Withdrawal Announcement

Attached is a draft copy of the proposed press release which would accompany the next troop reduction decision. Precise timing for the decision has not yet been established, however, I will be sure that you are informed as soon as the date is fixed. The President has asked that I furnish you with a copy of this draft on an exclusively eyes only basis. He requests that you provide any comments you might have to him through me on the same basis and as soon as possible, so that he will have the benefit of your views today.

The President has directed that distribution of this paper be handled in this way in order to avoid disclosure which would then require further delay.

Henry A. Kissinger

Attachment

DOS, OSD Reviews
Completed

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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[TS-HR-556]

PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE

After careful consideration with my senior advisors and in full consultation with the government of Vietnam, I have decided to reduce the troop ceiling in Vietnam by another 40,500. The new ceiling will be 484,000 as compared with the ceiling of 549,500. The total reduction in authorized ceiling strength since June 8 thus amounts to 65,500.

Since coming into office, my Administration has made major efforts to bring an end to the war.

- We have renounced an imposed military solution.
- We have offered free elections organized by joint commissions under international supervision.
- We have offered the withdrawal of U. S. and allied forces over a 12-month period.
- We have declared that we would retain no military bases.
- We have offered to negotiate supervised cease-fires under international supervision to facilitate the process of mutual withdrawal.
- We have made clear that we would settle for the de facto removal of North Vietnamese forces so long as there are guarantees against their return.

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- We and the Government of South Vietnam have announced that we are prepared to accept any political outcome which is arrived at through free elections.
- We are prepared to discuss the 10-point program of the other side together with plans put forward by the other parties.
- In short, the only item which is not negotiable is the right of the people of South Vietnam to determine their own future free of outside interference.

I reiterate all these proposals today. On September 2, 1969, North Vietnam's chief negotiator in Paris said that if the U. S. committed itself to the principle of totally withdrawing its forces from South Vietnam, and if it withdrew a significant number, Hanoi would take this into account.

Such a commitment exists.

The lowering of our troop ceiling by 65,500 is significant.

The time for meaningful negotiations has therefore arrived.

I realize that it is difficult to communicate across the gulf of five years of war. But the time has come to end this war. Let history record that at this critical moment, both sides turned their faces toward peace rather than toward conflict and war.